DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 328 229 IR 014 828

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TITLE New and Promising: Software Worth a Look. A MicroSIFT Survey of Educational Software Preview Center Coordinators. Volume II, No. 2.
INSTITUTION Northwest Regional Educational Lab., Portland, Oreg.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Nov 90
CONTRACT 400-86-006
NOTE 11p.; For Volume II, No. 1 of this series, see ED 320 570.
PUB TYPE Reference Materials - Directories/Catalogs (132)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Authoring Aids (Programing); *Computer Assisted Instruction; Computer Simulation; Computer Software Reviews; *Courseware; Database Management Systems; Elementary Secondary Education; Fine Arts; Language Arts; Mathematics Instruction; Multimedia Instruction; Optical Data Disks; Postsecondary Education; Science Instruction; Second Language Instruction

ABSTRACT

This guide lists 19 software packages considered to be worthy of further consideration by other reviewing agencies and schools by a group of 17 computer coordinators from educational software preview centers and evaluation agencies. The following software is listed: (1) ASK-IT, an authoring tool; (2) Balance of the Planet, an environmental simulation game; (3) Combo Pack Graphics, 300 graphics pertaining to nature, holidays, history, world cultures, and community among others; (4) Decision, Decisions: The Environment, a simulation dealing with environmental issues; (5) Discis Books, language arts books enhanced with music, voice, and sound effects; (6) File Force, a database manager; (7) FileMaker Pro, a database manager; (8) French Assistant, Version 4, a collection of translation, reference, and writing tools; (9) Igor Stravinsky, The Rite of Spring, analysis of Stravinsky's ballet score; (10) MacGraphX, a charting and graphics tool; (11) MathLab (Series I, II, III), for whole numbers, fractions and decimals, and special topics; (12) McGee Visits Katie's Farm, a preschool program for becoming familiar with computers; (13) Physics Explorer Series; (14) Probability Lab, explores statistical concepts; (15) SimEarth, a science simulation; (16) Spanish Assistant, Version 4, a collection of translation, reference, and writing tools; (17) Special Writer Coach, for writing skills; (18) Talking Sticky Bear Series, explores shapes, the alphabet, and opposites; and (19) ToolBook 1.0, for creating and customizing graphic applications. Each listing contains a brief description, the price, hardware requirements, and grade level. Producer contact information is provided at the conclusion of the guide. (DB)

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THE Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

ED328229

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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NEW AND PROMISING: Software Worth a Look

A MicroSIFT Survey of Educational Software Preview Center Coordinators

Volume II, No. 2

Zita Podany

November 1990

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In September 1990, a group of 16 computer coordinators from large educational software preview centers and evaluation agencies were asked to identify new products they have seen which, in their professional opinion, are worthy of further consideration by other reviewing agencies and schools. The purpose of this poll is to highlight titles which meet the criteria of new and "promising" software. The following list represents the results of this poll.

ASK•IT

Publisher: True BASIC **Price:** $99.95 ($69.95 until 12/31/90)
Grades: Adult
Keywords: Authoring Tool
Hardware Requirements: IBM or compatible, 512K, any graphics card, parallel printer; Mac Plus or higher, 1MB, system 4.2 or later, ImageWriter or Laser printer; Apple IIe, IIc, IIGS. Enhanced memory recommended for the Apple IIe.
Brief Description: Organizes questions, answers, responses, reading references, and hints into question files which can be edited at any time. Selected questions from test files can be used in a tutorial format for interactive use by students. The recordkeeping system keeps track of student responses for easier test item analysis and scoring.

Balance of the Planet

Publisher: Chris Crawford **Price:** $59.95 teacher's edition
Grades: 9-16
Keywords: Science, Earth Science; Environment
Hardware Requirements: IBM or compatible, 512K, mouse is optional; Mac Plus, SE, II. Both systems require a hard disk.
Brief Description: Environmental simulation game in which students assume the responsibility of being in charge of the planet. Current issues affecting the environment are presented from a political, economic, and environmental perspective. Activities are designed to promote cooperative learning and decision-making processes. Includes a User's Guide and Teacher's Guide.

Combo Pack Graphics

Publisher: Creative Pursuits **Price:** $74.95
Grades: 2-8
Keywords: Utility, Graphics, Art
Hardware Requirements: Apple IIe, c, GS, 128K
Additional Requirements: Works only with *The Children's Writing and Publishing Center*
Brief Description: Consists of three disks, "Nature," "People & Places," and "Holiday," totaling over 300 color graphics. Graphics pertain to nature, holidays, ancient and modern history, geography, world landmarks, world cultures, community, careers, and fashion. Includes curriculum-oriented handbooks, (the school edition, $89.95, will also contain ready-to-use lesson plans with black-line masters and picture reference pages).

Decisions, Decisions: The Environment

Publisher: Tom Snyder Productions **Price:** $119.95
Grades: 5-12
Keywords: Problem Solving, Science, Environment, Social Studies
Hardware Requirements: Apple II family, 64K; Mac Plus, SE, II, 512K; IBM and compatible, 256K--5.25" version requires hard disk installation.
Brief Description: A simulation dealing with issues facing the environment. Students, assuming the role of town mayor, must make decisions related to the environmental health of their town with respect to individual and community responsibility in local and global environmental issues. A cooperative learning activity in that students must analyze and share information in order to arrive at sound decisions. Includes a back-up disk, Student

Reference Books, a Comprehensive Teacher Guide, Critical Thinking Booklet, lesson plans, and reproducible worksheets.

Discis Books
Publisher: Discis Books **Price:** $69.95-$84.95 each
Grades: 0-6
Keywords: Language Arts, Literature, Reading, CD-ROM
Hardware Requirements: CD-ROM Drive; Mac Plus or higher; System 6.0 or higher; 1MB RAM for black-and-white; 2MB RAM for color.
Brief Description: Interactive computer-based books provide students with a new dimension to reading the original book. Discis Books are displayed on the screen as actual pages of a book, complete with text and illustrations, and enhanced with music, voice, and sound effects. The collection includes books by well-known authors, such as Beatrix Potter and Robert Munsch. Features which can be customized allow for individual needs of the user. These include designating variable delays between phrases, slower reading rates, adjusting style and text size, and whether the sound should be turned on or off. By clicking on a particular word or picture, the student can ask for a pronunciation, syllabification, explanation, or a second language translation. Ten titles are currently available and some are available with a second language background in Spanish, French, or Cantonese. They include: "The Tale of Peter Rabbit," "The Tale of Benjamin Bunny," "Thomas' Snowsuit," "Mud Puddle," "The Paper Bag Princess," "Cinderella," "Scary Poems for Rotten Kids," "A Long Hard Day on the Ranch," "Heather Hits Her First Home Run," and "Moving Gives Me a Stomach Ache."

File Force
Publisher: ACIUS, Inc. **Price:** $395.00
Grades: 12-16
Keywords: Database
Hardware Requirements: Macintosh Plus, SE, II, 1MB, System 6.0.2 or later, Finder 6.1 or later. Hard disk is required.
Brief Description: Relational file manager capable of storing text, numbers, yes & no questions, dates, times, and pictures (PICT, PICT2, or bit-mapped form). Files can contain up to 16 million records and 511 fields. Can calculate sums, averages, maximum and minimum values, and count on specified fields in a report. Labels and graphs can be generated based on information from the records. Unlimited relations can be created between files. Includes an Examples disk with ready-to-use databases and a Templates disk filed with artwork for customizing database layouts.

FileMaker Pro
Publisher: CLARIS **Price:** $299.00
Grades: 16
Keywords: Utility, Database
Hardware Requirements: Mac Plus, SE, II and up, 1MB, system 6.0 or later. Two 800K drives or a hard disk drive.
Brief Description: A database manager which includes features such as spelling-checker; automatic indexing; multiple-file lookups for relating information; multiple layouts to view, enter, and print data; graphics tools and color capability, mail merge; instant updating of multi-user files; multi-user file server technology allowing the sharing of files within a workgroup without any additional software or hardware; variable field length; custom field formats, scripts and buttons to automate routine tasks; calculation capabilities with over 75 financial, date, time, text logical, statistical, logarithmic, and trigonometric functions and operators. Graphics can be imported in TIFF, PICT, EPS, and bitmapped formats.

French Assistant, version 4
Publisher: Microtac Software **Price:** $79.95
Grades: 9-16
Keywords: Language Arts, Languages, French
Hardware Requirements: IBM or compatible; DOS 2.0 or higher; 512K minimum; hard disk.
Brief Description: A collection of translation, reference, and writing tools enabling documents and letters to be translated from English to French. Reference Tools include Random House bilingual dictionaries with over 2,000 verb conjugations, and grammar help on a variety of topics. Also contains a utility which allows for accenting characters. The reference tools and accent entry utility can be used with the Spanish Assistant's text editor, or they can be used independently in memory-resident mode with a text-based word processor, such as WordPerfect.

Igor Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring
Publisher: The Voyager Company **Price:** $99.95
Grades: 6-16
Keywords: Fine Arts, Music
Hardware Requirements: Mac Plus, SE, II with hard drive, HyperCard 2.0, CD-ROM drive.
Brief Description: Second volume in the CD Companion Series with recorded commentaries by Robert Winter. An interactive exploration and full analysis of Stravinsky's ballet score, *The Rite of Spring*. Package includes a CD and six-part HyperCard stack utilizing HyperCard 2.0. Topical coverage includes everything from an on-screen orientation of the entire work, discussion of Stravinsky's life and times, real-time commentary across the entire work, to a question-and-answer game using audio-based questions testing the user's comprehension of the material. Expected to be released sometime in December 1990.

MacGraphX
Publisher: Bravo Technologies, Inc **Price:** $199.00
Grades: 12-16
Keywords: Math, Graphing, Utility
Hardware Requirements: Mac Plus, SE, II, with 1MB of RAM; Hard disk recommended.
Brief Description: A charting and graphics tool utilizing color with graduated fills and a recalculating flat-file database. Users can create line, bar, and pie charts, fit curves to their data or add in their own curve fits, data transformation routines, and statistical calculations. Any subset of records and fields can be graphed regardless of where they may be in the database file. Data can also be downloaded from a mainframe or scientific instrument. Will be available in November 1990.

MathLab (Series I, II, III)
Publisher: CAE **Price:** $99.95 Whole Numbers, Special Topics; $134.95
Grades: 5-12 Fractions
Keywords: Math, Arithmetic, Whole Numbers, Fractions
Hardware Requirements: Apple IIe, GS, 128K. Color monitor is recommended.
Brief Description: Consists of three series, each sold separately: "Whole Numbers," "Fractions and Decimals," and "Special Topics." The various picture-problems contained on each disk are designed to develop specific mathematical and measurement skills covering topics such as line and angle measurements, operations with whole numbers, fractions, decimals, and ratio and proportion. Programs contain built-in tools to enable students in solving these problems. On-screen tools include: a drawing board, rulers, compass, protractor, grids, calculator, and a notepad.

McGee Visits Katie's Farm

Publisher: Lawrence Productions **Price:** $39.95
Grades: 0-1
Keywords: Language Arts, Readiness, Home
Hardware Requirements: IBM and compatibles, 640K; Amiga; Macintosh Plus, SE, SE/30, II, 1MB, system 6.05 (for B & W version), 6.02 (for color version); Apple IIGS, 1MB. Mouse required.
Brief Description: A preschool program, containing no words, enables the user to explore and at the same time become familiar with the computer. By simply clicking the mouse and making a selection, children guide McGee through a series of animated adventures around the farm from learning to milk a cow to sailing a toy boat on a pond.

Physics Explorer Series

Publisher: WINGS for Learning, Inc. **Price:** $125.00 per module
Grades: 8-12
Keywords: Science, Physical Sciences, Physics
Hardware Requirements: Mac Plus or greater with 800K disk drive
Brief Description: Newly developed physics courseware which will encompass a wide range of physics topics. Each module will focus on a particular aspect of physics. The Harmonic Motion and Gravity modules are currently available. "Physics Explorer: Waves," and "Physics Explorer: One Body" (an exploration of the effects of various inertial systems upon the motion of one body), are slated to be released in December 1990. Two new programs, "Ripple Tank," which explores the interference and reflection of waves in a two-dimensional medium, and "Two Bodies," which explores conservation of energy and momentum in two-body interactions, are currently being developed.

Probability Lab

Publisher: MECC **Price:** $59.00
Grades: 7-12
Keywords: Utility, Math, Statistics
Hardware Requirements: Apple II family of computers, 128K. Printer is optional.
Brief Description: A utility package which allows students to explore concepts in probability through designing and testing experiments using coins, dice, cards, marbles, wheels, and numbers. Users can try out as many possibilities as they feel necessary. For example, each experiment can have up to 1,000,000 trials, 10 dice can be rolled at a time, and a die can have anywhere from two to 20 faces. The program automatically checks for defined success, keeps track of results, generates random numbers, and can even prompt students to predict the outcome prior to the actual experiment.

SimEarth

Publisher: Maxis **Price:** $69.95
Grades: 9-12
Keywords: Science, Earth Science, Simulation
Hardware Requirements: Mac 512K, Plus, SE, II, SE/30, LC, IIcx, IIci, IIx, IIfx; 1MB RAM required for the black-and-white version; 2MB RAM is recommended for the color version (running the color version with 1MB RAM can disable some of the sounds); 800K disk drive; Hard disk is recommended.
Brief Description: A science simulation in which students assume responsibility over an entire planet. Covers four time scales: Geologic (continental drift, atmospheric composition, life formation); Evolution or Biologic (climate, biomes, evolution of intelligent life); Civilization (industrial development, pollution, energy management); Technologic (pollution, war, global warming, technological growth). By manipulating various factors, students learn about the interrelationships among variables which govern life and regulate the environment. Students can choose from one of seven pre-built planets

or create their own planet with a Random Planet generator. This program is based on James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis.

Spanish Assistant, version 4
Publisher: Microtac Software **Price:** $79.95
Grades: 9-16
Keywords: Language Arts, Languages, Spanish
Hardware Requirements: IBM or compatible; DOS 2.0 or higher; 512K minimum; hard disk.
Brief Description: A collection of translation, reference, and writing tools enabling documents and letters to be translated from English to Spanish. Reference Tools include Random House bilingual dictionaries, over 2,000 verb conjugations, and grammar help on a variety of topics. Also contains a utility which allows for accenting characters. The reference tools and accent entry utility can be used with the Spanish Assistant's text editor, or they can be used independently in memory-resident mode with a text-based word processor, such as WordPerfect.

Special Writer Coach
Publisher: Tom Snyder Productions **Price:** $69.95
Grades: 3-12
Keywords: Language Arts, Writing
Hardware Requirements: Mac Plus, SE, II
Brief Description: Coaches students weak in writing skills through the writing process. Program features can be customized to accommodate individual student needs. Some of the features include: speech capabilities, adjustable fonts and prompts, error-checking and highlighting, importing and exporting of text, and a "hidden letter" option.

Talking Sticky Bear Series (IBM & Tandy)
Publisher: Weekly Reader/Optimum Resources **Price:** $49.95 Alphabet; $39.95 Shapes, & Opposites
Grades: 0-2
Keywords: Language Arts, Reading, Readiness
Hardware Requirements: IBM XT, AT, PS/2, 512K; Tandy 1000 family, 3000 HL, 4000, 512K; Echo Speech Synthesizer or Covocs Speech Thing required except for Tandy 1000 TL, TL/2, SL, SL/2 or 2500XL.
Brief Description: This new talking series features three different programs: "Stickybear Shapes," "Stickybear Alphabet," and "Stickybear Opposites." The new speech feature allows students to hear instructions, words, or letters displayed on the screen.

ToolBook 1.0
Publisher: Asymetrix **Price:** $395.00
Grades: 12-16
Keywords: Authoring
Hardware Requirements: PC with 80286 or higher processor; Microsoft Windows ver. 3.0 or higher; DOS 3.1 or higher; 640K + 256K extended memory (1.5MB memory is recommended); a 1.2MB or 720K disk drive and a hard disk; graphics adapter card compatible with Windows (EGA, VGA, Hercules, 8514); mouse or other pointing device compatible with Windows.
Brief Description: A software construction set allowing users to create and customize their own graphic applications without needing to know complex traditional programming languages. Application development tools range from color drawing tools to a programming language. Program possesses hypernavigation capabilities, animation features, and text formatting. Toolbook is built around object-oriented programming.

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- Providing technical assistance in educational problem solving
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